

Exchange program in Napier University Edinburgh, Scotland

3rd Semester – September to December 2016

Preface

From the beginning of my study, I knew that I wanted to participate in an exchange program at my 3rd semester in Multimedia Design program at KEA. At the beginning, I considered other destinations other than Edinburgh, however at the end I wanted to try Edinburgh because it was a place I have never been to before.

Academic Experience

The procedure of choosing the module was at the beginning very confusing, and at the end there was a very few modules we could choose between. Even though there were other modules that I rather had, I was satisfied with the modules. I felt that the receiving university has been in general very helpful with both settling in and choosing the module.

My final modules were: Database Systems, Digital Video Development and Being Digital. To explain shortly about the modules: Database Systems was a module which focused on how to use SQL and designing a database from scratch. Digital Video Development which focused on how to use the camera for filming and editing short movies. Finally, Being Digital focused greatly on the use of Illustrator to design a poster and a logo for a campaign.

I felt that Digital Video Development was the most rewarding, because of the learning of the use of the camera. Learning to use the camera properly was not taught in depth while studying at KEA and therefore it was helpful for me. Also, the assessment where creating a documentary individually was very challenging but this assessment gave me a chance to create a video for my portfolio where I can show what I can do when working individually. I would recommend this module if there are any interest in filming and editing video. The module which I felt was least rewarding was Being Digital since the level was in general too low, and I felt I had the whole 1st semester over again.

However, the professors at the university was amazing. Before starting the modules, I was slightly scared whether the modules would be too difficult to understand. But they were all very helpful, easy to understand and very easy to talk to. For those who wants to work with Databases I would definitely recommend Database Systems, solely because of the amazing professors teaching in this module.

I think the most exciting part about the exchange was the fact that you could try different sports clubs and societies at the university. At the beginning, the university made a Fresher's week which is an event where they showed different sports clubs and societies you could be a part of. I chose to be a part of two societies: The anime society and the whisky society. I was especially excited

about the whisky society, and the meetings turned out to be one of the most amazing experience I ever had. I also soon found out that it was difficult to have social opportunities, since you are having three different classes due to three different modules. Therefore, I felt that joining a society was the best way of meeting new people and a great way to settle in to the new life at the university.

Practical Experience

Practically, I felt KEA was not helping much as I hoped. The actual international coordinator was on maternity and therefore we had a temporary international coordinator. The most problematic thing was that the temporary coordinator was very slow at responding and I had to write a mail many times to remind her to send me, for instance the corrected learning agreement. As mentioned above choosing a module was also very confusing because when I needed the approval for the chosen modules, I was sent back and forth between the coordinator, the professors, and the course coordinator at KEA. When choosing the module I felt the receiving institution was more helpful in this case.

I felt that finding an accommodation in Edinburgh was a very difficult task. The university could not provide any accommodation unless you have an exchange program which lasts for at least a year. When finding flats or flatmates there were also many places where they wanted someone who could stay for at least a year. I could not find any place to stay until I went to Edinburgh a week before the start of the university. In the end, I found a place in a small city called Musselburgh. Musselburgh is a fine place to stay, but it is an hour away with the bus from the City Centre and therefore not as practical as I hoped. Edinburgh has a bus card called Ridacard which is a card that allows you to travel with most of the Lothian buses and Trams for free in the Edinburgh area. This card has been a great help and as a student it is possible to get the card for approximately £35-£40 per month. In my opinion, I also think the rent was very high, but for instance, the prices at a grocery store was very cheap. I was also satisfied with the place I lived in, however at the end of my stay there was an argument between my flatmate/landlord and we unfortunately ended in a bad term.

The cultural/ personal experience

I personally did not feel any cultural challenge while living in Edinburgh. I think It was a place which was very easy to settle in, since the city itself is a very relaxing place and the people living there is very kind and helpful.

I felt that I had an experience in Edinburgh which I would never forget. To mention some of the best experience in the city was climbing the Arthur's seat, walk along the Royal Mile and The Edinburgh Castle (Since there was St. Andrew's Day on the 30th of November it was possible to enter The Edinburgh Castle for free. Usually the price of entering the castle is £16). Also, since I love literature, Edinburgh was like heaven to me. If there is an interest in literature I would recommend The Writer's Museum and an antique bookstore called Armchair. Even though I could not travel further than the City Centre I felt there were so many things to see in the City Centre

itself. There are also several tours which is arranged in the City Centre which is a good way to get to know the city better. I would personally recommend the Ghost Tour which is a tour with a great mixture of the city history and ghost stories.

Conclusion

I would recommend to find a place near the City Centre and joining a society to be able to have some social opportunities. Although I have not tried it, there are also some list of events and trips which the students at the University is making, which might also be a great way to travel outside of Edinburgh. Finally, I would recommend to be open hearted and not to be afraid to try things out.

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